

Public Hearing of the Human Services Committee  
Testimony in **Support** of HB 6616  
An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to  
Immigration Status

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Co-chairs Gilchrest and Lesser and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee.

I am writing today in strong **support** of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

As it now stands, Connecticut law allows for coverage of income-eligible and otherwise uninsured children aged 0-12 regardless of immigration status until their 19<sup>th</sup> year **but not youth who are age 13 and older**. Connecticut has proven committed to health justice for all people, and this bill will close a gap in eligibility for coverage of a vulnerable undocumented population by phasing in state-funded health care coverage for income-eligible and otherwise-uninsured youth and young adults aged twenty-five or less, building on recent grants of coverage to similarly situated younger children regardless of their immigrant status.

A 2022 [Rand Research Report](#) stated that approximately 60% of the 113,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut do not have health coverage. **Having health insurance is a vital component to the healthcare of a person, as well as the overall health of the state.**

As a student pursuing a master's in public health, I want to highlight the far-reaching benefits of expanding Medicaid coverage in this manner. Studies have found that ensuring children have access to healthcare improves their health as they age, with [one study](#) finding, for example, that more years of childhood eligibility are associated with **fewer hospitalizations in adulthood**. Another [study](#) found that each additional year of childhood Medicaid eligibility **saves 2 lives per 10,000** from ages 19 to 28 in aggregate.

Additionally, Medicaid access has long-term benefits beyond children and youths' health status including a [higher likelihood](#) of high school and college graduation as well as [higher earning potential](#) as adults. As it stands, Connecticut falls a bit short of protecting its undocumented children and giving them the best opportunity to thrive throughout their lifetimes.

And these benefits are not limited to children alone. One of the most important aspects of health insurance is protection against financial catastrophe. When families have the peace of mind and protection of the safety-net they can thrive. In resource strained households having health insurance coverage is integral in alleviating the stress of possibly devastating healthcare costs. None of us can know if or when disaster might strike, and for some these threats become reality and families are forced to make difficult tradeoffs. The [spillover effects](#) of the Medicaid program include increasing a family's ability to pay for housing, food, and monthly bills. Giving access to Medicaid is a true lifeline for these families.

Expanding Medicaid to some of the most vulnerable people in Connecticut is an essential component in creating a state that fosters equity and prosperity for all people, regardless of special circumstance. By extending these provisions to an even broader population of immigrants, we as a state can move closer to [the Vision](#) of the Department of Social Services, which envisions a Connecticut where *all* are healthy, secure, and thriving.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

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